

IF the love of a woman helped actor Robin Williams put his wild past behind him, his latest movie helped him bury it.

The Fisher King, a mythological drama about an eccentric, homeless New York character named Parry, is one of the most original movies Hollywood has turned out — and gave Robin one of his greatest challenges.

Parry, a former professor of medieval history, lives in a make-believe world of castles and dragons, a world he created to insulate himself from the tragedy of his

wife's murder. Jeff Bridges plays Jack Lucas, an obnoxious, but top-rating, New York DJ whose off-handed arrogance triggers the incident which turned Parry's life upside-down and has now also led to his (Lucas') downfall.

When Parry saves Lucas from disaster, an amazing friendship begins and the key to the redemption of each of them lies in their efforts to help Parry win the heart of a woman he has long admired from afar (played by Amanda Plummer).

Robin admits that much of Parry seemed once part of him, and he couldn't have played the role without getting his own life in order.

"You literally have to use the darker side of your imagination in a role such as this," he says.

"It's like an old acting exercise taken to the extreme. Psychiatrists warn actors it can be dangerous dealing with someone (in this case, the character Parry) unless you're prepared in your own life."

Robin's marriage (his second) to Marsha, three years ago, helped him make that preparation.

The star's much-written-about wild ways — which began when he shot to stardom in the TV series Mork And Mindy,

- Robin Williams as Parry, a medieval warrior in New York in The Fisher King, and below, with wife Marsha, the woman who changed him.

Former wild man how the loves prepared him for lead in one of most original

followed by the hit movies Good Morning, Vietnam and Dead Poets Society — are now behind him.

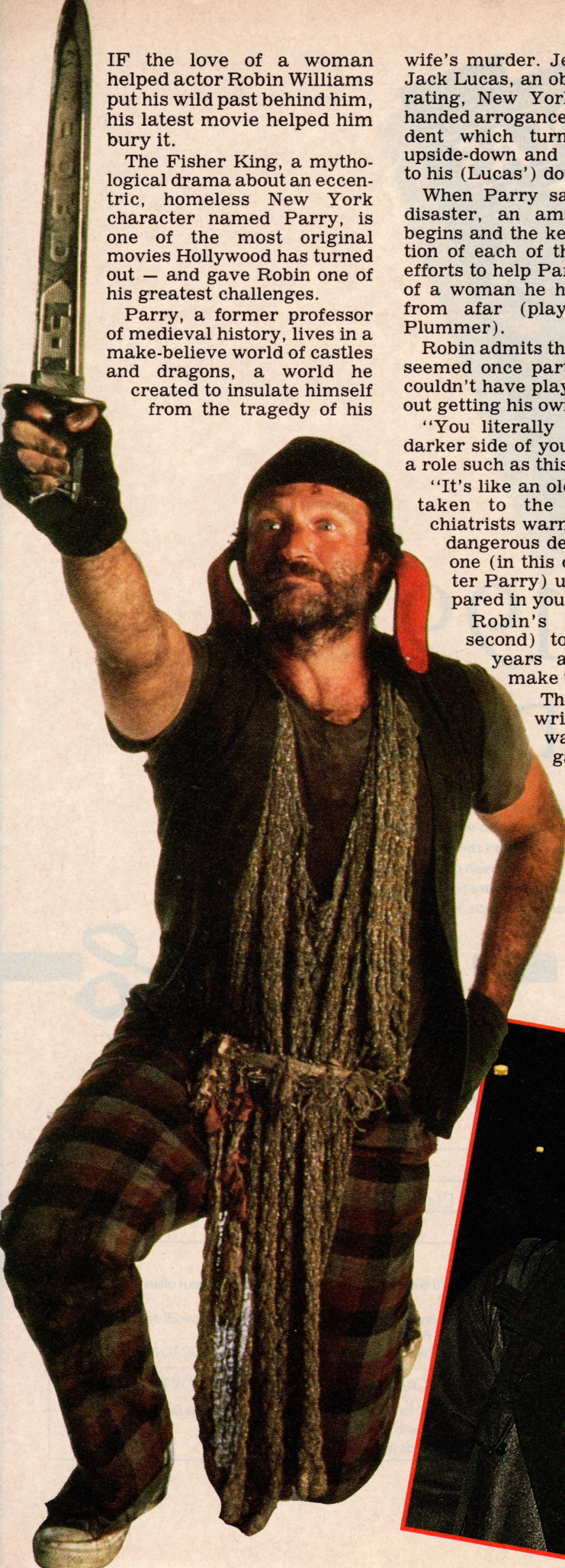
The breakdown of his first marriage and his problems with cocaine and alcohol were scrutinized intensely by the media, and the 39-year-old star now admits years of psychotherapy and the love of a good woman have helped him get back on track.

"Parry didn't have therapy, but therapy helped me enormously," he says. "And in finding Marsha — someone who loves you for all of you, and accepts you — that's the beginning. Then you're free and you're able to forgive yourself."

The personalities of the "old" Robin Williams and Parry were perhaps too close for comfort.

"Parry has a personality he created to avoid dealing with a horrifying incident in his life and there are a lot of aspects of that in me," Robin says.

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the gruelling
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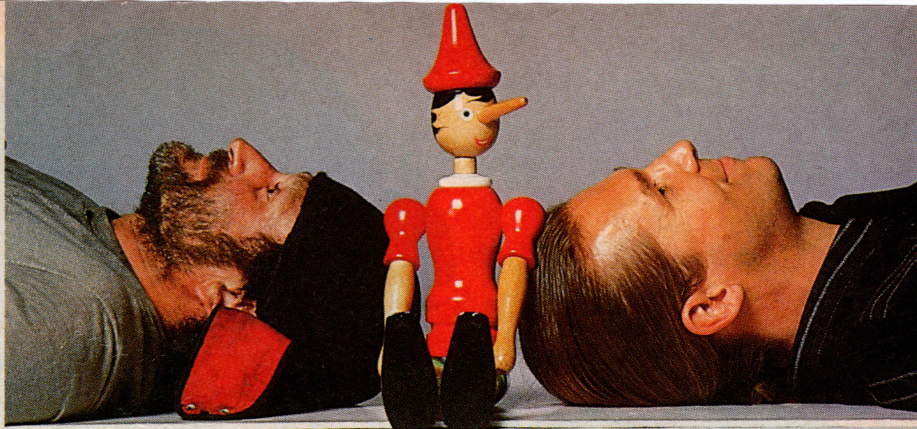
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"There have been times, nine or 10 years ago, when I was not wanting to deal with anybody and I would just perform all the time. I overcame it the same way Parry did, through connection with another human being."

True, Robin still likes to be "switched on" during an interview — speaking "in tongues" and taking off everybody from Arnold Schwarzenegger to George Bush ("you have to realise that if you take John Wayne and tighten his ass, that's George Bush") — but when the laughter stops these days, you know who you're talking to.

"Through Marsha and some wonderful friends, I realised you can still be a performer and do all those wonderful things, but then you have another place, which is you," he says quietly.

Robin gets very soft-spoken, almost to the point of mushy, when he discusses his children.

The actor and his wife, whom he first met when she was nanny to his son during Robin's first marriage, live outside San Francisco with Zachary, now 8, and their own daughter Zelda.

Their next child is due next month, and Robin talks excitedly about his hopes for that generation of children.

"You see it in their eyes that something is going on with these kids," he says. "It's like 'day-care centre of the damned' — a whole generation of children is being born who are much smarter."

"Their eyes say, 'We'll take over where you left it — please don't get in the way'. I think they're the hope for the future and we need to keep them stimulated and show them books and not just raise them on TV as Nintendo kids."

Although *The Fisher King* was initially thought to be too off-beat

• Just kidding around . . . Robin Williams and Jeff Bridges "toy" with each other in *The Fisher King*.

for Hollywood, the movie is now a big box-office hit in America and has already made Robin a hot favorite for an Oscar nomination for his inspiring performance.

After *The Fisher King*, Robin starred in another fable-like story, playing Peter Pan in Steven Spielberg's up-coming

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movie *Hook*, co-starring Dustin Hoffman as Captain Hook and Julia Roberts as Tinker Bell.

He admits there are also darker elements to the *Hook* movie than one might expect from that fable.

"My character is a yuppie businessman who has to go back to his youth and become Peter Pan in order to save his children, who have been kidnapped by Captain Hook," he says.

"Peter Pan, even in the book, was a self-centred nine-year-old who didn't care about others. He was quite lethal and a violent, nasty little boy who hated his parents, so it was interesting stuff to explore because I felt safe enough to look at it."

Robin also enjoyed the chance to "fly" — across the set on wire cables.

"It's a total release when you get to fly. It felt wonderful to do and if it turns out as wonderful in the movie, it will be amazing."

"But let's face it, it could be like peeing in brown corduroy pants," he adds with a grin. "It can feel wonderful, but no one can see it!"

From Jenny Cooney
in Los Angeles